

Remarks Following Discussions With President Ricardo Lagos of Chile and an Exchange With Reporters

July 19, 2004

President Bush. We'll answer a couple of questions. First, I'll say something; the President will say something. I'll call upon an American correspondent; he'll call upon a Chilean correspondent; and we'll do this two times.

First, *bienvenidos*. I'm glad you're here, Mr. President. Ricardo Lagos is a very wise man, who is—understands the politics of South America very well and is very worldly, and so I always enjoy visiting with him. He's a man of good advice and sound counsel. And so I'm looking forward to our continued discussions over lunch.

One of the things that has worked well is the free trade agreement with Chile, and we talked about that today. It turns out, Chilean exports to the United States are up, but United States exports to Chile are up as well. And that's a positive development. It's good for the people of Chile, and it's good for the people of the United States. And our relations are strong, and they're important relations.

And so, Mr. President, welcome. I'm glad you're here. I'm looking forward to our continued discussions.

President Lagos. Thank you. Well, let me tell you that I am extremely happy to be here again, to be able to discuss and talk with President Bush about what are the major areas in the region. Also, we were update on the later developments in the Middle East.

And at the same time I think, as President Bush have say, our free trade agreement has been working in the right direction. And we're extremely happy to see that. Later on, we would like also to see what do we have in the next APEC meeting in November and what are the trade discussions in the Doha round next month—next week.

And I will say that so that from the point of the view of the region, President Bush has been able to have a lot of commitments to the region, and we were discussing also our own commitment in Chile with regard to Haiti, what we are doing in the region. And

I think that it's very important, as President Bush has told us, in a sense, that the U.S. is going to continue backing, helping the Haitian people. In Spanish?

President Bush. Si.

[At this point, President Lagos spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided.]

President Bush. Pues, la primera pregunta de el hombre de AP.

President Lagos. I will translate. [Laughter]

Q. Thank you.

President Bush. That would be you.

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States Recommendations on Intelligence

Q. Thank you. The Acting Director of the CIA says he sees no need to create a Cabinet-level National Director of Intelligence. Does he speak for you and your administration when he says that, Mr. President? And speaking of the CIA, can you give us an update on when you expect to name a new Director?

President Bush. The 9/11 Commission will issue a report this week and, evidently, will lay out recommendations for reform of the intelligence services of the United States. I look forward to seeing those recommendations. They share the same desires I share, which is to make sure that the President and the Congress gets the best possible intelligence.

I have spoken about the reforms. Some of the reforms, I think, are necessary: more human intelligence; better ability to listen or to see things; and better coordination amongst the variety of intelligence-gathering services. And so we'll look at all their recommendations, and I will comment upon that, having studied what they say.

Director of Central Intelligence Nomination

Q. And the new Director appointment?

President Bush. Still thinking about it. Let you know when it's going to happen. I wouldn't—I know there's intense speculation over time; people get their hopes built up. And still—still taking a good, hard look.

Riggs Bank Investigation

Q. Mr. President—

President Bush. Yes.

Q. —from Chile. We've been hearing a lot in the past few days about the Riggs investigation that found out hidden accounts of Senator Pinochet. I understand two Senators that are working in that committee are asking the Justice Department to take legal actions. Is that possible? What consequences can that have?

President Bush. Well, I think the people of Chile must know that there will be a full investigation. It's important for the facts to be *en la mesa*, as we say, on the table, and—so that we know what course of action may or may not be needed. And that's what you're seeing. You're seeing a transparent society dealing with allegations and/or—and the Riggs Bank is being fully investigated, and they'll be investigated in a very open way.

And the President brought this issue up. Of course, he's concerned about it as well. He wants to know the truth. And I appreciate that, and we'll make sure that people do know the truth. And that's what you're seeing. You're beginning to see the process of truth-finding.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. Sir—

President Bush. *Esteban.*

Iran

Q. Thank you. We're hearing now that eight of the September 11th hijackers passed through Iran before attacking the United States. Do you think there's a September 11th link to Iran?

President Bush. Well, listen, we want—of course, we want to know all the facts. Acting Director McLaughlin said there was no direct connection between Iran and the attacks of September the 11th. We will continue to look and see if the Iranians were involved. I have long expressed my concerns about Iran. After all, it's a totalitarian society where free people are not allowed to exercise their rights as human beings.

I have made it clear that if the Iranians would like to have better relations with the United States, there are some things they must do. For example, they're harboring Al Qaida leadership there, and we've asked that they be turned over to their respective countries. Secondly, they've got a nuclear weap-

ons program that they need to dismantle. We're working with other countries to encourage them to do so. Thirdly, they've got to stop funding terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah that create great dangers in parts of the world.

No, this has been an issue that I have been concerned about ever since I've been the President. As to direct connections with September the 11th, we're digging into the facts to determine if there was one.

Chile's Role in Haiti

Q. —from Chile. What do you think about the role that Chile is playing in the reconstruction in Haiti and as observer of the political referendum in Venezuela?

President Bush. Listen, the Chilean response in Haiti was rapid and important. President Lagos is a decisive man, and when he saw a problem, he went to the people of Chile and explained the problem and responded. And I want to thank him for that. It was—Chile is making a very important contribution to the stability and, hopefully, the prosperity of Haiti. And we spent a lot of time talking about, today, about how the United States can continue to not only stay involved but to help. And I find it very interesting that the United Nations is sending a very distinguished citizen from Chile to Haiti to help stabilize that country so the people of Haiti have a chance to live a hopeful life.

And that's going to require security measures, and as the President mentioned—I think you said in Spanish—there's a donors conference tomorrow—it's a very important conference, and that we will be attending, along with Chile, to see if we can't set priorities for the people of Haiti * so they have a chance to live a good life.

And the second part of the question was?

Chile's Role in the Venezuela Referendum

President Lagos. Venezuela.

Q. About political referendum—

President Bush. Oh, Venezuela, yes, again, this is a—Chile plays a very important

* White House correction.

role in our neighborhood, and the referendum in Venezuela is an important referendum. And the referendum must be conducted in a honest and open way. And the influence of President Lagos is a very important influence, because he has made it clear that for the credibility of the current Government, they must welcome observers, they must encourage observers, and they must not interfere with the process, so that the people of Venezuela have a chance to express their opinion without fear of reprisal.

And so again, I want to thank my friend Ricardo Lagos for playing a very constructive role.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John E. McLaughlin, Acting Director of Central Intelligence; and Juan Gabriel Valdes, U.N. Special Representative and head of the U.N. Mission in Haiti. A reporter referred to Chilean Senator Augusto Pinochet, former President of Chile.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad bin Badawi of Malaysia

July 19, 2004

President Bush. We'll have just two statements.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

Prime Minister Abdullah. Thank you very much.

President Bush. We just had a very wide-ranging discussion. I appreciate the Prime Minister's friendship. I want to thank him for his leadership. I want to thank him for the cooperation on counterterrorism efforts.

We talked about how we can work together to improve the economic condition of both our countries, as well as the Middle East. He had some very interesting suggestions about the Middle East. We talked about the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and I assured him I am fully committed to the development of a Palestinian state that can live side by side with Israel in peace.

We talked about Iraq, and I told him I was pleased with the progress being made in Iraq. And the Prime Minister had some

helpful suggestions. So, all in all, it's been a very constructive meeting.

I was pleased to hear that there are 7,000 Malaysian students in U.S. schools, and I think that's a constructive sign, Mr. Prime Minister. And I wish them all the best, and I know they'll be treated well here in the United States.

So welcome, sir.

Prime Minister Abdullah. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for accepting me to come here to call on you in spite of your very busy schedule.

But I would like to say this, that our bilateral relation between the United States and Malaysia is certainly very strong. You cannot judge our bilateral relations simply on the basis of what you hear—that we may have some differences on Iraq or on Palestine. But the foundation of the bilateral relation has remained strong all the time. And our economic cooperation is excellent, I must say, and our education programs, and we have some other cooperation in defense and many areas of cooperation, which has made our relation with the United States—our relation is very, very, very strong.

And we believe—and I believe that more can be done, and we have already improved a lot. And today I have this assurance from the President, himself. And I am certainly grateful you have been able to explain to me so many aspects of the issues pertaining to Palestine and Israel. There's nothing better than to get from the President of the United States, himself, on all these issues because he is very much involved. And management of all these problems and issues relating to this Palestine and Israel and so—other issues too.

And we talked about Islam, and we believe that the Muslim countries can be helped to better understanding the unique capacity-building. And we are also trying to do whatever we can. I think this capacity-building can help to reduce poverty, the condition of poverty, and with that, deprive the terrorists of their own agenda to hijack these people, and to support them.

And at the same time, I'd like just to tell you that Malaysia is ready to send a medical team, a sizable medical team to Iraq.

President Bush. That's great. Thank you.